Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

427.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance for the capture, storage and use of digital data obtained through the use of Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology.

427.1.1 DEFINITONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Official law enforcement purpose - The investigation, detection or analysis of a crime; of a violation of the Maryland vehicle laws; of a terrorist operation; or of missing or endangered person searches or alerts (Md. Code PS § 3-509).

427.2 POLICY

The policy of the Easton Police Department is to utilize ALPR technology to capture and store digital license plate data and images while recognizing the established privacy rights of the public.

All data and images gathered by the ALPR are for the official use of this department. Because such data may contain confidential information, it is not open to public review.

427.3 ADMINISTRATION

The ALPR technology, also known as License Plate Recognition (LPR), allows for the automated detection of license plates. It is used by the Easton Police Department to convert data associated with vehicle license plates for official law enforcement purposes, including identifying stolen or wanted vehicles, stolen license plates and missing persons. It may also be used to gather information related to active warrants, homeland security, electronic surveillance, suspect interdiction and stolen property recovery.

(a) All installation and maintenance of ALPR equipment, as well as ALPR data retention and access shall be managed by the Support Services Commander. Mobile LPR systems will be installed in EPD vehicles as determined by the Chief of Police of his designee.

(b) The Support Services Commander will be responsible for maintaining the detailed inventory record of all LPR system equipment for dissemination to MSP ITD.

(c) The Support Services Commander must pre-approve the installation or transfer of any LPR system.

(d) Any damage to LPR systems will be reported immediately according to established EPD policy and procedures related to the loss of or damage to EPD equipment.

427.4 OPERATIONS

Use of an ALPR is restricted to the purposes outlined below. Department members shall not use, or allow others to use, the equipment or database records for any unauthorized purpose.

(a)   An ALPR shall only be used for official law enforcement business (Md. Code PS § 3-509.)

(b)   An ALPR may be used in conjunction with any routine patrol operation or criminal investigation. Reasonable suspicion or probable cause is not required before using an ALPR.

(c)   While an ALPR may be used to canvass license plates around any crime scene, particular consideration should be given to using ALPR-equipped vehicles to canvass areas around homicides, shootings and other major incidents. Partial license plates reported during major crimes should be entered into the ALPR system in an attempt to identify suspect vehicles.

(d)   No member of this department shall operate ALPR equipment or access ALPR data without first completing department-approved training.

(e)   No ALPR operator may access confidential department, state or federal data unless authorized to do so.

(f)   If practicable, the officer should verify an ALPR response through the appropriate official law enforcement database before taking enforcement action that is based solely on an ALPR alert.

427.5   DATA COLLECTION AND RETENTION

The Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC) will house a LPR System Operations Center, which is the central clearinghouse for all license plates scanned by LPR systems. It is maintained by MCAC personnel designated by the MCAC Director. The Operations Center is a data collection and reporting tool. All LPR system data collected will be maintained on the Operations Center server at MCAC. The Operations Center provides a database, inquiry tool, history tracking, and reporting for the entire LPR program. It manages and provides a storage and search structure for the license plate information being collected in the field.

The Operations Center acts as a secure intra-net site, allowing only personnel with password protected access to some or all of the license plate data collected. The Operations Center receives all scanned reads collected by fixed and mobile LPR systems deployed throughout the State and organizes the data into a central database. The central database supports the reporting and query functions. Authorized MCAC personnel have the ability to:

(a)   Look for a license plate or partial license plate in the history and view the image and location of matches.

(b)   View maps with the location of plate reads and alarms.

(c)   View statistical reports on reads and alarms; and

(d)   View reads and alarms for a specific geographic area and time frame.

427.6   RELEASING ALPR DATA

Information gathered by the ALPR is not subject to disclosure under the Public Information Act (Md. Code PS § 3-509.) The ALPR data may be shared only with other law enforcement or prosecutorial

agencies for official law enforcement purposes or as otherwise permitted by law. Requests for LPR data shall be forwarded to the Maryland Coordination and Analysis Center (MCAC).